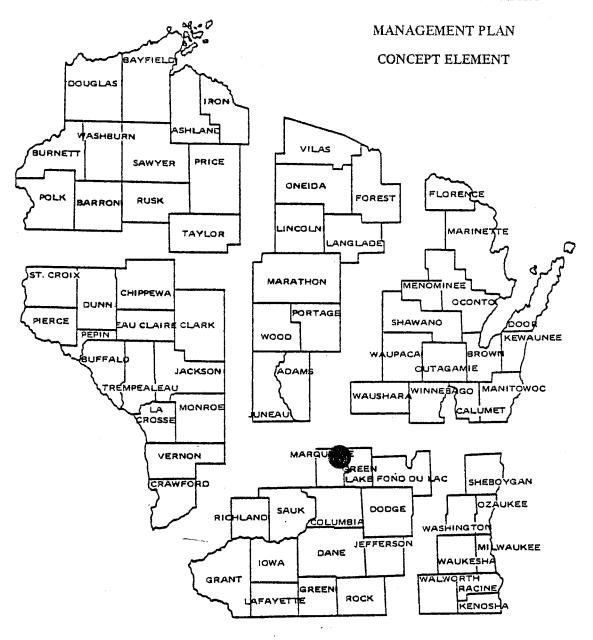
GERMANIA WILDLIFE AREA



Property Task Force

Approved By:

Date:

James R. Hunforn /cik

Thomas Hansen, Work Unit Wildlife Manager Glen Eveland, Area Wildlife Manager Leader:

Jim Kronschnabel, Forester Dale Brege, Fish Manager Paul Scott, Real Estate Agent Bill Wheeler, Researcher

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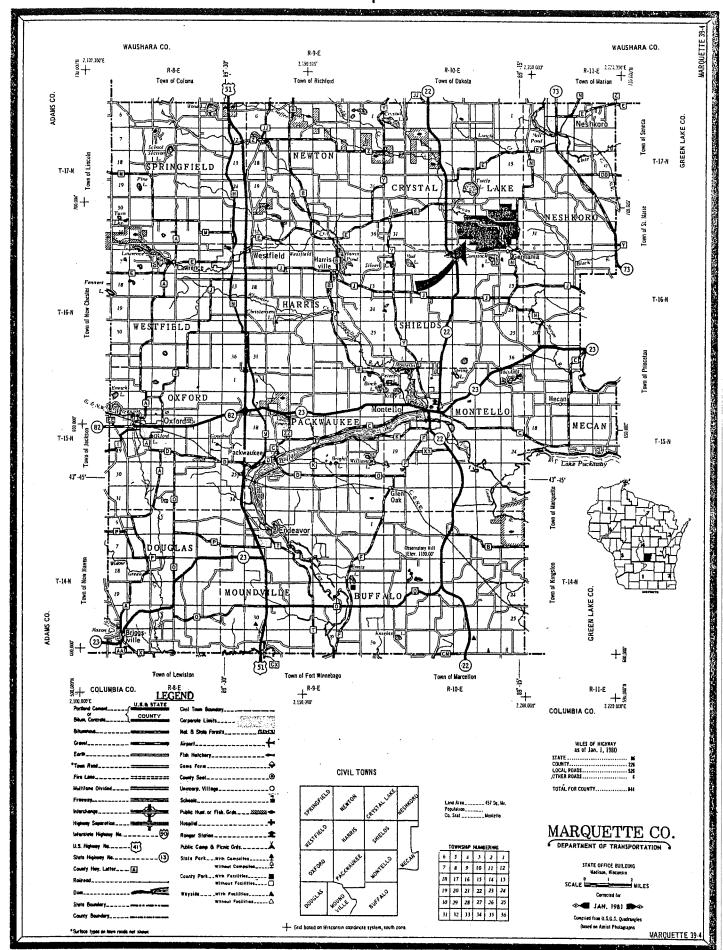


FIGURE I LOCATOR

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SECTION I - ACTIONS

GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND ADDITIONAL BENEFITS

Goal

To manage a state-owned wildlife area for waterfowl production, hunting trapping, fishing, and compatible recreational and educational opportunities.

Annual Objectives

- 1. Produce .7 ducks per acre on 940 acres of permanent water (658 ducks).
- 2. Provide for a peak population of 1,000-2,000 ducks during the fall migration.
- 3. Provide 7,000 participant-days of hunting and trapping opportunities as follows:

Activity	<u>Participant-days</u>
Waterfowl	2,000
Deer (bow/gun)	2,800
Ruffed grouse	800
Furbearers	500
Other game	900

4. Provide 2,000 angler-days of warmwater fishing.

Annual Additional Benefits

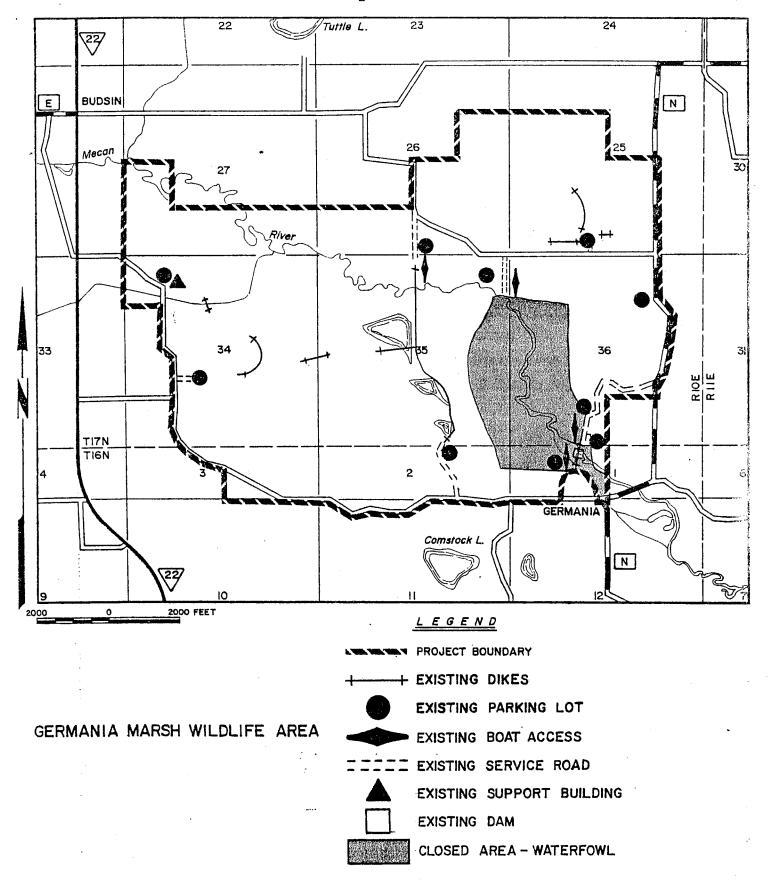
- Accommodate 1,500 participant-days of other recreational and educational uses including hiking, nature study, cross-country skiing, and photography.
- 2. Benefit other wildlife including resident and migratory species.

RECOMMENDED MANAGEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

Development and Maintenance (Figure 2)

Continued acquisition, development, and maintenance is necessary to meet goals and objectives of this property. All existing development, habitat, and facilities will be maintained as outlined in Section II.

This property is almost completely developed. There are no new waterfowl development projects other than nesting cover improvement. No new roads, accesses, or parking areas are planned. The existing developments are nearly adequate to meet goals and objectives of the property. There are no feasible sites remaining for waterfowl flowage development.



Annual mowing, spraying and burning of 100 acres of grass and brushlands will be necessary to control undesirable tree invasion. These practices will sustain the grasslands for duck nesting and also benefit other species such as bobwhite quail, rabbits, sandhill cranes, and various songbirds. However, additional quality dense upland nesting cover (DNC) for waterfowl is needed. Eighty acres of DNC will be planted on existing and acquired upland fields.

All areas proposed for development will be examined for the presence of endangered and threatened wild animals and plants. If listed species are found, development will be suspended until the District Endangered and Nongame Species Coordinator is consulted, the site evaluated, and appropriate protective measures taken.

A complete biological inventory of the property will be conducted as funds permit. Additional property objectives may be developed following completion of such an inventory.

Land Acquisition (Figure 3)

Existing ownership is 2,334.46 acres; 60 acres are under permanent easement. The acreage goal is 2,384.46 acres. Only the upland habitat located in the southeast corner of the wildlife area is necessary for management. The balance of the private lands within the acquisition boundary need not be purchased. As a result, no change in purchase goal is necessary.

Land acquisition will continue to be from willing sellers. State purchase of lands with improvements will be avoided if possible. If purchase of improvements is unavoidable, they will be traded for other lands within the property boundary or sold outright.

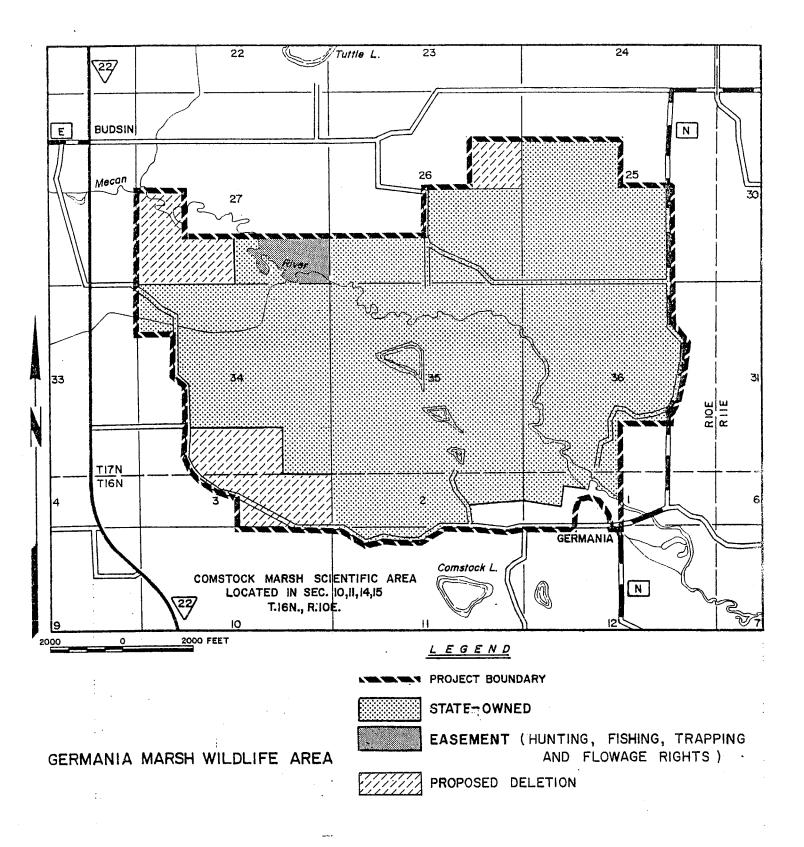
Timetable and Costs

The acquisition of private tracts is completed by negotiations as they become available. Additions will enhance the total productivity of the wildlife area and increase public use. Complete development of the duck nesting habitat will take about 10 years at a total cost of \$5,000.

Acquisition costs to complete the total goal are about \$35,000. The annual operating budget, including the fish weir, is estimated at \$5,500 to maintain current and proposed management of the property.

<u>Other</u>

Responsibility for management of the fishery resource is assigned to Bureau of Fish Management personnel. The electric weir on the Mecan River will be maintained to prevent upstream movement of northern pike and carp. Recently, the carp population in the marsh has increased and is causing damage to the aquatic habitat. Waterfowl production and use has been decreasing over the past 3 years. The fall population in the refuge has decreased to 500 ducks from a peak of 3,000 following rehabilitation in 1976.



A drawdown of the flowages will be initiated when the carp population is substantial, probably every 5-7 years, depending upon waterfowl habitat conditions. A complete chemical treatment to control the carp populations will be completed the same year with reflooding to follow shortly after treatment. Various spot treatment methods will be investigated for feasibility.

Stocking of northern pike, largemouth bass and panfish to control future populations of carp and furnish a sport fishery will begin the following year. This overall project has an estimated cost of \$7,500.

An Environmental Impact Assessment on this operation has been approved and is on file. Recently, there has been only a minimal conflict between the fishing and hunting interests on this marsh. A periodic drawdown of the marsh to rejuvenate the marsh vegetation, even without a chemical treatment, is a recommended management practice.

SECTION II - SUPPORT DATA

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

<u>History</u>

In 1867, the Germania Dam Company built a dam and mill which created a large, shallow flowage of several thousand acres called Germania Lake. It was a mecca for wildlife. Waterfowl were attracted in great numbers by the wild rice that flourished in its waters, and furbearers such as muskrat, mink and raccoon were abundant. Fishing was excellent in the river channel and other deep water areas.

In 1902, the dam was removed to permit the farmers to harvest wild hay. However, haying was soon abandoned because of poor economic return. In the absence of annual haying, the marsh reverted to sedge and willow.

In 1948, a committee of game managers inspected the area as a potential wetlands restoration project. Its report was favorable and the engineering surveys which followed indicated that the area had a good water supply and was suitable for flooding. Local residents, the Izaak Walton League and other sportsmen's clubs in Marquette County repeatedly expressed their interest in the project.

The Wisconsin Conservation Commission approved acquisition of land to create the Germania Marsh as a wetlands restoration project on September 9, 1955. A preliminary project statement was submitted on December 8, 1955, for federal aid approval (Pittman-Robertson Funds).

Current Use and Management

At this time, hunting is the main use made of property. There have been up to 150 cars in the parking lots on opening day of the waterfowl season. Roads and trails are utilized by birdwatchers, hikers and nature study groups from

various schools and universities. Group tours are occasionally conducted by the Department. Canoeing is popular on the Mecan River and portage areas are marked at dam sites and other barriers.

A portion of the marsh is closed to hunting to hold waterfowl throughout the season and offer some protection for the waterfowl resource. In the main 600 acre flowage, 300 acres are posted closed to hunting and trapping during the waterfowl season. In 1976, the closed area had a fall peak of 3,000 ducks.

During the 1960's, peak counts of waterfowl reached 5,000 ducks, 300 Canada geese, 500 blue and snow geese, and 3,000 coots. The fall harvest of ducks reached 1,000 in the early 1960's. Mallard, blue-winged teal, wood duck, green-winged teal and ringneck are the main species of duck harvested.

Deer hunting, both bow and gun, is the next most important hunting use. Hunting pressure is heaviest during the deer gun season, reaching 80 hunters per square mile on opening day. The property is located in some of the most productive deer habitat in the state. Hunting pressure on species such as cottontails, squirrels, and ruffed grouse is moderate, while pressure is light on raccoons, foxes, and woodcock.

The public hunting area is stocked during the fall with 180 cock pheasants to furnish added hunting opportunity. Other public uses of the property include nature study, birdwatching, canoeing, berry-nut-mushroom picking, and hiking. Concentrations of waterfowl also occur in spring, and birdwatchers make good use of the marsh at this time.

Trapping of furbearing animals such as muskrats, foxes, minks, otters, raccoons and beaver also occurs. Annual harvest of muskrat reaches 500 during peak population years.

Fishing activity on the main flowage and below the dam occurs during years of reduced carp populations. Northern pike, brown trout, bullheads, largemouth bass, suckers, and panfish are the most common species caught. Most of the brown trout are caught in the Mecan River above the main flowage.

The flowage always had carp populations after they were introduced into Wisconsin in the 1880's and in numbers large enough to destroy aquatic vegetation and increase water turbidity, reducing the productivity of the marsh for waterfowl. In the 1960's, a carp trap was built below the dam and rough fish crews removed carp annually. These carp migrated upstream from the Fox River. The trap was not effective and is no longer in operation.

In 1964, an electric fish barrier was installed on the Mecan River above the main flowage to block upstream movements of northern pike that were foraging on trout. This barrier has been a successful development and is still in operation.

In 1971, in conjunction with a drawdown of the flowage, electric shocker boats were used in an attempt to control the carp population. This control operation was only partially successful as an appreciable number of carp escaped and remained in the Mecan River. The lower and upper impoundments

were again drawn down in 1976. That summer, fish management crews used antimycin and rotenone to kill 30,700 pounds of carp and 515 pounds of other rough fish (buffalo, sheepshead and bullhead). Only 190 pounds of game fish were killed.

In 1977, 600,000 northern pike fry, 45,000 largemouth bass fingerlings and 15,000 adult panfish were restocked. There were several years of good northern pike fishing and the marsh vegetation improved. Six years after treatment, carp have increased to unacceptable levels. Local fishermen indicate that game fish success has decreased.

To produce moist soil foods (smartweeds, Bidens sp., rice cutgrass) for waterfowl, management drawdowns of the pools have been completed over the last 20 years. Japanene millet was also seeded by airplane. Production of moist soil species attracted many thousands of waterfowl to the marsh upon reflooding in the fall.

Drawdowns were not, however, without controversy. Residents of the Village of Germania frequently protested the drawdown operations on the grounds that it was damaging both fish and wildlife habitat and was unsightly. Legislators and the news media became involved, delaying drawdowns and causing bitter feelings. Meetings were held in 1975 with local residents and a verbal agreement on a management plan was reached. This plan called for a drawdown and chemical treatment. Annual drawdowns were cancelled.

After 1976, periodic drawdowns were conducted at 3 to 5 year intervals. These operations would be repeated only if the aquatic vegetation deteriorates. Following the 1976 drawdown and carp removal operation, the marsh has not again been drawn down, but has been kept at optimal levels that create marsh habitat for all wildlife, particularly duck broods.

Restrictions have been placed on the property to protect wildlife populations and habitat and to insure fuller enjoyment of the property by both sportsmen and other visitors. Use of off-road vehicles, motorboats and horses are prohibited. No overnight parking or camping is allowed.

The annual wildlife habitat management activities on state-owned lands include sharecrop farming on 30 acres of cropland to create winter food and nesting cover, issuance of 3-5 land-use permits and burning, mowing, and spraying of 100 acres to control field-invading trees and brush.

All of the buildings have been sold or razed and the sites have been bulldozed to reduce public safety hazards and improve aesthetics. Thousands of wildlife food and cover shrubs have been planted on upland sites. All interior fences have been removed to make the area safer and more convenient for public use.

The lower dam, with a large roller gate and spillway, and the upper dam, with a drop inlet structure spillway, were completed in 1959 for \$31,230.00. Since 1959, approximately \$44,000.00 of other construction has included dam repairs, 2 additional water structures on the lower dam, 4 smaller flowages with 6 dikes and 5 water control structures, electric fishweir system, 9 parking lots, spillway bridge, dam safety fencing, 11 large project signs, 2.5 miles

of gravelled road, 5 road gates, 3 boat accesses, rip-rap on the lower dike and 12 miles of boundary and closed area posting (Figure 3).

All facilities require annual maintenance to preserve wildlife habitat and insure safe public use. There is one small wood frame building that has some limited storage use. In addition to hunting license revenue, Pittman-Robertson, waterfowl stamp, park road and ORAP funds have been used to develop the property.

RESOURCE CAPABILITY AND INVENTORY

Soils and Geology

The marsh soils are poorly drained Adrian and Houghton muck and peat, both deep and shallow types. The upland soils range from poorly to well-drained fine sandy loams of the Granby, Tedrow, Gotham and Plainfield types. There are large muck farms located just west of the property.

Most of the sandy upland soils can become droughty during extended dry periods and tend to be lacking in fertility. The history of this marsh dates back to the Ice Age when when the glacier covered Marquette County. Large marshlands and the surrounding gently rolling uplands are the common feature in this portion of central Wisconsin.

Wildlife

Common wildlife species include white-tailed deer, red fox, gray fox, fox squirrel, gray squirrel, cottontail rabbit, ruffed grouse, woodcock, ring-necked pheasant, common snipe, bobwhite quail, raccoon, muskrat, opossum, coyote, weasels, mink, otter, beaver, Canada and blue/snow geese, coot, mallard, black duck, pintail, blue-winged teal, green-winged teal, wigeon, shoveler, gadwall, wood duck, ringneck, lesser scaup, canvasback, bufflehead, goldeneye, ruddy duck, redhead and grebes.

A wide variety of songbirds, owls, hawks shorebirds and marsh birds occupy the property. The estimated breeding population of sandhill cranes is 6 pairs. Overall, 40-50 non-breeding sandhill cranes occupy the property. About 300 use the property as a fall staging area. Approximately 400-500 ducklings (mallards, blue-winged teal, wood duck, green-winged teal) have been produced each year.

Fish

The current fishery provides warm and cold water species. However, trout and certain species of minnows are present in some portions of the Mecan River because of natural downstream drift from upstream cold water sections of the river. The primary fishery is considered to be warm water species, including northern pike, largemouth bass, and panfish. Carp tend to be the most numerous species and dominate flowage areas until treatment and removal is accomplished.

A survey in 1976 found northern pike, perch, bluegills, common sunfish, brown trout, white suckers, largemouth bass, carp, black bullheads, black crappies, rock bass, green sunfish, northern common shiners, northern blacknose dace, barred fantail darters, northern pearl dace, hog suckers, brook lampreys, blackchin shiner, northern muddlers, and mudminnows.

Endangered or Threatened Species

No endangered or threatened species of fish, amphibians, molluscs, mammals, birds, reptiles, wildlife or plants are known to be present on the property. There has been one recorded sighting of an osprey (endangered species) flying over the property. The Office of Endangered Resources (DNR) has been consulted regarding inventory needs and presence of any records of endangered plants or animals.

Vegetative Cover (Figure 4)

The large expanses of marshland contain reed canary grass, woolgrass, cordgrass, bluejoint grass, various sedges and cattails. Some marsh areas have shrub species: winterberry, alder, red osier dogwood, bog birch, and willows. The wetter marsh communities contain burreed, river bulrushes, hardstem bulrushes, wild rice, Saggitaria sp. (duck potato), pond lilies, pondweeds, coontail, waterweed, duckweeds, water stargrass, milfoil, bladderwort, and perennial smartweed. Wild rice has been planted with some success in the upper and lower pools to improve the aquatic habitat for waterfowl.

Formerly cropped or pastured upland areas contain bluegrass, bromegrass, quackgrass, asters, goldenrod, alfalfa, timothy, big and little bluestem and clovers. There are 400 acres of grass and brush nesting cover that, along with undisturbed woodlands (for wood ducks), have produced an appreciable number of ducks yearly.

A complete forestry reconnaissance is pending. The forested areas contain quaking aspen, red, white, burr and black oaks, shagbark hickory, white birch, basswood, black cherry, choke cherry, American elm, cottonwood, boxelder, black locust, black ash, red and silver maples, red pine, jack pine, white pine, white spruce, and tamarack.

Common upland shrub species include gray dogwood, wild plum, hazelnuts, ninebark, prickly ash, and planted species such as Russian olive, buffalo berry, mixed crab, Siberian pea, wild grapes, and multiflora rose. The vegetation consists of 66% low brush and marsh, 18% forest and 16% upland grass or cropland.

The major vegetation on the property is associated with the wetlands that have little tree cover. The upland wooded areas are mainly hardwoods that were cut over and grazed before the Department acquired the property. Oaks are the major upland tree species of importance for mast production or use as den trees.

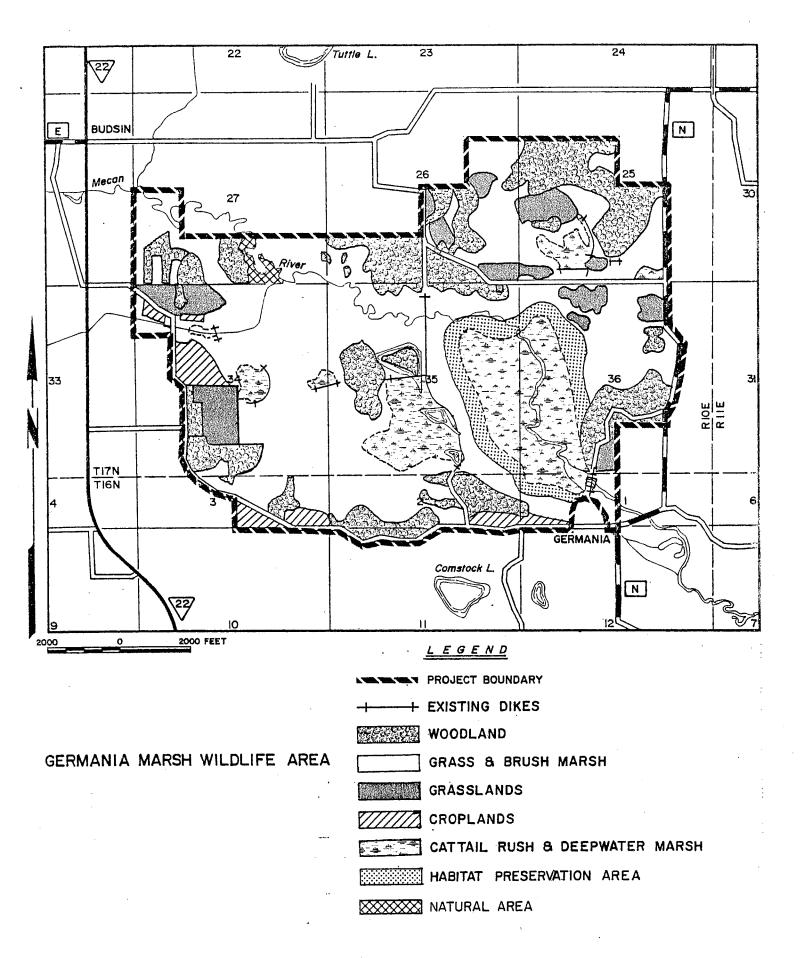


FIGURE 4 VEGETATION / LAND USE DESIGNATION

Most wooded upland have good oak reproduction but are of only limited value as wood producers. However, timber or firewood cutting sales will be initiated where enhancement of the wildlife habitat is possible.

Surface Water Resources

The main water source is the Mecan River which originates in Waushara County about 20 miles to the northwest and flows through the marsh. The river continues its flow below the Germania Dam and enters the Fox River in Green Lake County averaging 30 feet in width and 0.5-8 feet in depth.

The recorded water pH is 8.5 and alkalinity is 132 ppm. On September 13, 1976, the stream flow was recorded a low flow reading of 78.94 cubic ft. per second (cfs). Stream flow has been recorded as high as 180 cfs on the Mecan River (date unknown).

The Comstock Feeder Stream flows into the marsh from Comstock Lake and enters the southwest corner above the upper dike. This feeder varies from a slight flow up to 20 cfs. Two other feeder streams with intermittent flow enter from the west and north. These 2 streams often dry up in summer when rainfall is below normal.

The lower pool contains 600 acres of water. The Mecan River and all the streams combined flow into this main pool, providing an abundant source of water that is held by the main dam in the SE corner of the property. Water depth ranges from 0.5-6 feet, with an average depth of 2 feet. This pool contains both submergent and emergent aquatic plants.

The upper pool contains 300 acres of water and is fed by Comstock Stream and another intermittent stream. This pool contains mostly emergent vegetation, but there are some small areas of open water with excellent submergent aquatic vegetation near the dike.

Four smaller flowages total 40 acres of water and are fed by the intermittent streams. These smaller flowages contain somewhat fertile waters, tending to be dark stained because of the abundance of natural vegetation in the watershed. Most fish do not survive in these flowages over winter.

The water clarity is good, except in the lower pool where the carp population is high. The flowages are all shallow and productive for muskrats and waterfowl.

<u>Historical and Archaelogical Features.</u>

The State Historical Society has been contacted concerning features and a letter from them is included in the Appendix. The adjacent Village of Germania has a rich history dating back into the 1800's settlement period. There are no planned developments that would affect any archaelogical features. If any ground disturbance is necessary, the State Historical Society will be contacted.

Land-use Classification (Figure 4)

Habitat Preservation (HP) - The shoreline on the lower flowage is important waterfowl, furbearer and fish habitat. No major alterations are feasible, other than woody vegetation control and periodic drawdowns.

Public Use Natural Area (N) - A unique mixture of wet-mesic prairie, sedge meadow and fen communities is located in the northwest corner of the wildlife area will be protected from development. The diverse and showy flora on this 15-acre site offers goal educational opportunities for outdoor enthusiasts.

Wildlife Management and Fisheries Areas (RD_2) - All areas not designated HP or N will be used for wildlife or fisheries management. These areas make up the bulk of the property. Development and maintenance of this habitat will enhance waterfowl and fish populations. The waterfowl closed area is included in this section.

MANAGEMENT PROBLEMS

1. Off-Road Vehicle Use

The surrounding dwellings and summer residences provide a source of off-road vehicles. The closing of old trails and seasonal closing of service roads is a necessary management operation. Gating and blocking of roads and trails is carried out to stop abuse of the landscape, facilities and vegetation. Patrols are run, as time allows, to prevent vandalism. Many of these trails are used by hikers and by hunters as walking trails.

2. Public Overuse

Because of the close proximity to the metropolitan areas of southern and eastern Wisconsin, waterfowl and gun deer hunting pressure is heavy for several days each fall. At this time, however, because of the short duration of these situations, the problems don't appear to be severe enough to warrant controlled hunting regulations on this property.

3. Vandalism, Littering, Camping

In the past, overnight parking and camping have resulted in vandalism, littering and sanitation problems. Patrol and strict enforcement of new laws that now prohibit these activities can keep these abuses of the property to a minimum. There are numerous private campgrounds in the vicinity that have adequate facilities and that charge a nominal fee. Vandalism of the property facilities could be controlled with increased patrols.

RECREATION NEEDS AND JUSTIFICATION

Regional planning reports suggest that the Germania Wildlife Area region will continue to have high recreational value and public use in the future.

Marquette County has a relatively small population of 8,367 people. The surrounding counties have a population of 80,620. However, the real reservoir

of users comes from the nearby population centers: Wisconsin Rapids-Stevens Point-42,066; Madison-182,189; Appleton, Neenah-Menasha, Oshkosh, Fond du Lac 182,795 and one million plus (Milwaukee area).

The waterfowl resource, particularly ducks, is quite fragile in Wisconsin. The need for good duck breeding and resting areas, such as Germania Marsh, has been and will continue to be an important consideration in wise wildlife resource management.

This property can continue to furnish opportunity for conservation education and nature study type activities. The nearby Mecan Youth Conservation Camp uses this property as an outdoor education site. However, public demand for increased camping, picnicing, hiking and nature observation has not been demonstrated for this area.

ANALYSIS OF ALTERNATIVES

1. Status Quo

No further land acquisition, nesting cover development, drawdowns and carp control projects would be planned. Hunting opportunity and waterfowl use and production will likely decrease in the long term. While costing less, when carp increase and long periods occur without a drawdown, the habitat for wildlife production will decrease.

2. <u>Continued Acquisition, Development and Maintenance</u> (Selected alternative)

Recommended actions include completion of a limited acquisition program to reach the recommended goal, continuance of the periodic marsh rehabilitation programs and maintenance of all existing developments in a condition to continue high wildlife and safe public use. The details are described in Section I.

Some limited increase in costs is necessary to develop new nesting cover and periodically rehabilitate the marsh. However, with normal operating budgets, maintenance of all other existing facilities can be accomplished.

3. Reduce Property Size

Reduction of property size would diminish overall habitat and development potential. Cost savings would occur, but goals and objectives of the property would be reduced and public needs would not be accommodated as well.

4. Enlarge Property Size

Enlargement of the property would require significant increases in acquisition costs due to the agricultural nature of surrounding lands. Since public hunting can be accommodated by cheaper, short-term leases, increased wildlife production and public recreation would be the primary objectives of expansion.

No clear public demand for recreational use beyond the current wildlife area's potential has been projected. While wildlife production, in particular duck production, is deserving of priority attention, cost/benefit ratios appear prohibitive in this area in light of statewide opportunities.

APPENDIX

MASTER PLAN COMMENTS

By: Richard W. Dexter

Representing: The State Historical Society

Date: January 6, 1982

We have searched our records for information on properties of architectural, historical, or archeological significance in the Germania Wildlife Area.

None of the buildings in the wildlife area are eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

A prehistoric village site was reported to the State Historical Society in the 1920s as being located in the W 1/2 of Section 2 in Shields Township. The village site may be associated with a more recently reported site, Mq-45, located just outside the boundaries of the wildlife area.

Although Crystal Lake, Shields and the other neighboring townships have not been systematically surveyed by a professional archeologist, a great many prehistoric sites have been discovered in the area. We recommend that prior to any ground-disturbing activities in the wildlife area, the Department of Natural Resources consult with our office to determine whether an archeological survey is warranted.

If you have any questions on this matter, please contact me at (608) 267-2732.

By: S. Nichols

Representing: Wisconsin Geological and Natural History Survey Date: March 5, 1984

Page 3, Par. 7. Does \$5,000 refer to a total cost or a cost per year?

Page 3, last paragraph. It appears to be undocumented, especially in general waterfowl population declines, that the total population decline is attributable to carp.

Page 3, Par. 8. Recon should be reconnaissance.

Page 8, Par. 2. Probably only one glacier went through Marquette County that influenced Germania Marsh. Sentence could be changed to...when the glacier covered Marquette County.

Page 9, Par. 7. Mecan Springs is closer to 20 miles northwest of Germania Marsh than it is to 7 miles.

DNR RESPONSE: Text modified as suggested.

By: Dick Lindberg

Representing: Wild Resources Advisory Council

Date: April 3, 1984

The Council suggests that a mention be made of natural area potential for all property plans even though no potential is found to exist. Most wildlife (and fish) properties are poorly suited for wild and wilderness area designation, but may contain natural areas.

Some mention should be made of suitable uses (recreation and education) other than hunting.

DNR RESPONSE: Natural Area designated. Recreation and education text added under current use and management section.

By: Cliff Germain

Representing: Scientific Areas Preservation Council

Date: March 16, 1984

Natural area designation recommended for parts of Section 27.

DNR RESPONSE: Concur; text and illustration added.

By: Cynthia A. Morehouse

Representing: Department of Transportation

Bureau of Environmental and Data Analysis

Date: March 23, 1984

We have reviewed the Master Plan for the Germania Wildlife Area in Marquette County. It is our determination that the recommended management and development program would not generate significant adverse effects on the State Trunk Highway System. We recommend, however, that you coordinate your land acquisitions abutting township roads and county trunk highways with the appropriate officials in those levels of government.

Thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on this Master Plan.

DNR RESPONSE: Acquisition coordination implemented.

2289N